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SUBSCRIBE NOW. THE INDEPENDENT 251 Broadway, New York City,

Postoffice Box, 2787. RECOLLECTIONS OF A COLD WINTER

New York News.

I am not philosopher enough to comprehend fully the curious and sudden changes of temperature incidental to almost every climate; and there is something particularly unaccountable in the extraordinary severity by which the seasons are occasionally character-ized. The winter of 18—was one of these, and will remain indelibly impressed upon my memory. One week specially was intensely cold; the sky was clear and blue, the air had a de-

the streets affected us with acute pain in the comples; a moist hand would freeze in this rou baluster of the steps i-stage-drivers and hackney conchnien were found stiff and dead ecachines were found stiff and dead upon their boxes. The student's ink congcaled by the fire; the affinent, with all the appliances of wealth, could not keep themselves comfort-able; and the heart aches to recall the condition of the poor, shivering and trembling around the cheerless firetrembling around the cheerless hre-places of their dillipidated dwellings, half-naked, hungry and destitute—it was, indeed, a terrible winter for them. Many perished; some directly from the cold, while, although others linger-ed till the weather moderated, yet sickness and exposure had broken down their constitutions, and the soft

breath of spring blew over their The snow in the street had a granite consistency, sparkling like diamonds in the brilliant sunshine, which shone all day with the ineffectual fervor of the moon upon its unmelted wreaths and rocky banks. Those who could kept in doors. Those whom business called abroad could scarcely be recognized through the multiplicity of garments. Overshoes and moccasins, buffalo skins and blankets, shawls, fur gloves and caps, and volumin-ous cloaks over great cloaks, everywhere met such eyes as could pene trate through the rich and curious frost-work which accumulated with every breath upon the window pain Of course the city was locked up it ice. Canals and rivers all over th ice. Canals and rivers all over the country were closed. A silent bleakness and desolation resigned on land and water worthy of the polar regions. The Hudson spread out a solid field, and even the bay—a very unusual event—presented to the eye one vast mass of motionless ridges, interspersed with plains of glassy smoothness; broken masses of ice, which the tide, in the act of congelation, had forced up in heaps; and hills of snow, the remains of a heavy storm by which this extraordinary period of cold weather had been preceded. The southern mails were conveyed from the Jersey side in sleighs instead of toats, and the papers mentioned, as a curious fact, that a pedestrian had crossed to the city from Staten Island with only the loss of one of his ears.

This excessive cold terminated as

This excessive cold terminated as addenly as it had commenced. A southern wind one morning blew over the city with a more moderate breath, the sun regained its warmth, and in a the sun regained its warmth, and in a few days the eves of the houses began to drip, and ponderous masses of snow to slide from the slanting roofs, to the imminent danger of the foot passen-gers below; the wooden sheds and house-tops recked with the steaming evaporation—the streets grew wet and sloppy, and all things relaxed under the influence of a regular thaw; still, sloppy, and all things relaxed under the influence of a regular thaw; still, however, although the bay began to discover indications of a breaking up, under the combined power of the sun and those rapid tides, which rush, in opposing currents, from the East river and the Hudson, yet the latter re-mained bound in its tight prison, af-fording a strong temptation to persons fond of skating—an amusement which the mud-gutters and the mill ponds render almost peculiar to boys, yet render almost peculiar to boys, yet which, in the present instance, was found irresistible to large numbers of

our population of all ages.

I was at that period a stripling twenty of rather a solitary turn mind, though not averse to sport, of which skating must even be consider-ed one of the most agreeable varieties. It is an exercise full of fiery excite-ment and exhibitation. Distance is traversed with a velocity incredible— every muscle of the form seems laid out with unaccustomed force upon the power of motion—you glide, you float, you fly—you pass through space with a thought—wheeling, circling, darting—and rivaling the swallow in its airy gambols. The bosom rejoices as if in the possession of a newly discovered

The sun was about an hour above the horizon when, after a light dinner. I took a pair of skates under my arm, and bent my way down to one of the wharves on the western side of the what was and so of men and boys enjoying themselves upon the ice, darting by each other in every direction, wheeling and fiving with ceaseless velocity and various which resembled the play of a swarm of insects in the summer air. Here a troop of little fellows limped along on one skate; there another of the glided with both feet equipped.

A rush of to multious hope poured in upon my soid. I sprang up and shouted; the voice replied:

"For God's srke, who is there? I am in danger of my life. Can you ald term you ald term you ald term you ald term you all terms of anguish hursting from my "Well," exclaimed Mrs. Raggles, and with arms skimbo, taking a last earnest look at the marking its still to the mark the marking is said to the one of the human frame."

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"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Raggles, and the mouth frame. "I we may have a chance to the total artist.

for the sport, at one moment approach-ing within a few yards of the land, and again hurrying away off till they lost themselves amid the busy multi-

Every boy bred in New York knew how to skate; but the facilities for practicing this inspiring sport are passing away so effectually and rapidly under the jurisdiction of our street cutting, house-shifting, hill-leveling, pond-filling corporations, that I fear the time is nigh at hand when the art will be almost extinct. The very cliwill be almost extinct. The very climate itself is growing more even and insipid, as if a member of the con-spiracy to exterminate our ancient favorite amusement. Be that as i may, on this memorable occasion

entered into the enjoyment with all my soul. The ice presented a great variety of surface on the part selected by the skaters as the most convenient for their purpose. Between the rough cakes and hills which sometimes obstructed our career there wound litthe narrow passages of silver smoothness, which again expanded into fields frozen in furrows and ridges, as if the congelation had arrested the water in the act of lifting its waves.

I skated leisurely along, musing up-on the peculiarities of the scene, till, at length, I wandered far from the shore, anxious at once to escape the riot, jostle, boisterous laughter and shouts of the crowd, and to reach newer ice; that upon which I had been skating being much cut up by the innumerable tracks, and also a little wet and sloppy. On, therefore, I went, finding ample companionship in my own thoughts and observations, till, at length, I awoke to the sudden con-sciousness that the sun had set, the night-shades were gathering around, and nearly every individual of the vast numbers, who, when last I looked to-ward to the shore, were swarming around me, had disappeared. I my-self had been lured on by a sheet of ice

"By my faith," I thought, as I aroused myself for a hasty return, "this would be a rare place to spend the night in, truly, and I away down the bay, full three miles from the shore. I have been over-venturous

of a mirror, much farther than I in

The last glimmer of day faded from the sky, which had stretched in broad yellow radiance above the dimly seen hills of New Jersey, but the night be-ing without a moon, the stars crowded but in soft, rich clusters, beaming and sparkling above my head with beautiful and unwonted spleudor. As I gazed up a sensation of weariness came over me. I had exerted myself much beyond my strength, and now that the evening breeze blew upon me felt chilled, tired and exhausted Anxious to reach home, however, I called up all my strength, and made the best of my way toward the city, which lay before me, the countless lights flashing out from its dark heavy mass. But the maxim of the inspired Roman poet, however oft and furnished with the new bamboo-quoted, I found sadly applicable to my carbons—a material he has chosen, present condition. Fucilis descensus not because the carron has anything special to recommend it, but because the material is very uniform in texture lusive ealmness that beguiled some great difficulty, and, among many obvictions forth to death. A walk across structions, I found it a laborous task the icy masses which now appeared to lie around me in great numbers.

I sometimes had to pick my steps with toil and awkwardness, where my skates were rather an incumbrance climbing over a line of confused brok-en pieces of ice, a strap which bound the skate to my right foot snapped as-under, and I found every endeavor to repair it fruitless. I was compelled then to disembarrass both my feet, with the agreeable prospect of finish-ing my expedition by walking—an ex-ercise which, even on terra firma, I did not ears to have thus uncereme. did not care to have thus unceremo-niously thrust upon me, but which now, hungry, faint, fatigued, far from home and on the ice, was a peculiarly home and on the ice, was a peculiarly unpleasant mode of conveyance. My chagrin was considerably enhanced too, and some serious fear flashed across my mind with a force which rendered all my previous troubles comparatively insignificant, on fibd-ing that the ice was evidently under-going a thaw—its surface being half going a thaw—its surface being half an inch under water, which, in some places, appeared of a much greater depth. "Good beavers!" I exclain-ed alond, now truly and justly alarm-

ed, "the ice is breaking up." I looked anxiously around. Not a being was to be seen. No boat, of course, of any description could penetrate here—no vessel was in my neigh-borhood—and if there had been, of what use would she be too me, if, as I now feared, the ice was melting. I exnow feared, the ice was melting. I examined the surface around me. It was evidently yielding to the influence of the warmth of a remarkably mild evening, and perhaps the restless and powerful tides. In many places more elevated it was still wet and soft, and at length, to my unutterable horror and despair, I perceived that I stood upon a mass which was almost detached from that above me, and swayed around with a heavy, slow motion—a mere island—about to float fronts a great monoply. If Me Edicaret motion—a mere island—about to float off to sea. I shuddered with cold hor-ror. My heart beat quick. My eyes glanced wildly around in fruitless search of some means of escape. I could not swim, and not even a plank appeared in sight. "Is it possible?"
I at length I thought. "Has my time
I at length arrived! Shall I cease to exist before the morning? Shall I never
see the sun again? Those dear friends
who are walting for me now at home,
can it be that I have parted from them

These thoughts rolled tumultuously through my mind, while I was strivbent fearfully beneath my tread. Once became me to collect my energies and perish—if I must perish—with the composure and dignity of an honest man and a Christian. I addressed a prayer, therefore, to the merciful Power which had called me into being, and then climbed up on a hill of wet ice, several pieces of which crumbled at my touch. With my blood curdling in my veins, I here saw the piece upon which I had been encompassed gradually and with a heavy crash disjoined from the rest, so that the flood of the river, swollen by a long restrained current, gushed upon long restrained current, gushed upon the fragment almost flowed to my

orever-forever and ever ?"

murmured, closing my eyes and clasp-ing my hands convulsively together, as I felt myself in motion and saw the clear, cold water, new on every side of me, washing against my frail back, and sparkling in the dim starlight. I was aroused by a voice. A rush of to-multons hope poured in upon my soil. I sprang up and shouted; the voice re-plied:

"For God's srke, who is there? I am in danger of my life. Can you aid

of life again shooting through my

NUMBER 45.

heart.
"I thought," replied the stranger "that I could cross the river on horse back, but I am adrift." "Leap into the water with your horse," I said; "he can carry us both

horse," I said; "he can carry us both to the shore."

"He is already spent," replied the man, "and I dare not leap into the cold water; I should freeze to death or drown. May heaven have mercy on our souls! for this is our last night."

"Do not die," shouted I, "without an effort; your horse will carry us safely across. Try him, if you would ever see daylight again!"

ever see daylight again!"

My words aroused him. I saw him mount the animal, who started, as if himself fully sensible of his danger. "I will take the leap friend," he cried; "but, should I perish, promise me, in case of your escape, togo to —, and inform my wife and children that I blessed them in my last moments. I have seen many a nights peril, but never before one like this."

After giving to me a promise of a nature similar to that which he had exacted, he dashed the rowels into the flanks of his affrighted steed, who reared again, and started back from the brink. At length, however, a deep heavy plunge announced that they were committed to the flood. A groan and a shrick rose above the rush of the watter, then for a moment all was still. I listened in an agony of suspense. There was again splashing and smothering screams, bubbling as the waters closed around their victim. heard no more, except the measured trokes of the steed and a snorting and secultar neighing, singularly express ve of terror. In a little while this oo, ceased, and everything was silent. flung myself down and buried my

ace in my hands, stunned. It was in plessing that my senses left me. I awoke with my dear mother's unmarked by a single track, and shin-ing with the perfect, unbroken beauty hand upon my forehead. I had been discovered at daybreak upon the frag-ment of ice which had lodged near Governor's Island, and a small boat had taken me off. For a week! had

been raving, and my life nearly given over. I heard, with curious feelings, my mother subsequently remarked upon my good fortune in having es-caped, as she had learned from the pa-pers that a man, on the same night, had perished in an attempt to cross the river with a horse.

EDISON'S NEW EXPERIMENT. The indefatigable Edison is still at work upon his electric-light problem, and, undaunted by previous discour-agements, is still confident of final and

complete success. A reporter of the New York Tribune, who visited Menio New York Tribune, who visited Menio Park the other day, found him pre-paring for an experiment upon a still larger scale than ever before, his prop-osition being to operate hundreds of street lamps through eight miles of wire. The laboratory was a hive of industry. It was lit with a dozen in-condessory. candescent lamps, burning brightly and furnished with the new bamboo-

> and has fewer imperfections than other stances that he has tested. In the machine-shops his men were busily at work upon the details of his new exent, and several of them were placing in position an immense dy-namo-machine of 1,550 horse-power, will also be used in the experiment. It was a notleeable feature of the interview between the Tribune's repor-ter and Mr. Edison that he assumed perfect success of the electric light and considered that part of the problem solved. The experiment which he is now making is to place the process of electric lighting upon a safe basis of commercial success, so that it can compete with gas. To this end he is get-ting everything down to the bottom cost. As one illustration, the lamps have heretofore been made by hand each lamp requiring two hours' work To overcome this he has built a factory

to make glass and is teaching boys b blow it. The main feature of his ex shout 5.000 periment is to operate several hundre treet-lamps in New York, through eight miles of wire, with a steady light of sixteen-candle power, which is a moderately bright light that will not be too brilliant or tiresome to the eye. In the interview he thus explained his purpose: "The object is to devise the means of establishing electric lighting on a commercial basis; to dis tribute the current from a central station and measure it, as gas now is, and to bring the cost down to a point of other proper office facilities which could not be anticipated and provides where the enormous moneyed in-fluence of gas can be successfully encountered. The plans and specifica-

terest all over the country, as it con-fronts a great monoply. If Mr Edi-son can furnish a sufficiently bright and steady light at a cheaper cost than gas, it will prove a great public bles-sing, not only in the reduction of cost, but also in the simplicity with which the lamps can be operated, since a simple pressure of the finger can light or extinguish all the lamps in a city simultaneously. It is not safe to pre-dicate that gas will be entirely driver out of use by it, or, even if his experi-ment should be successful, that it will

se immediately adopted, since he will have to encounter the tremendous opposition of the immense capital in-vested in gas, but even if it should through my mind, while I was striving continually to dash through the little sea which began aiready to encompass me. I tried in twenty places to regain the main fields, which I hoped might be yet attached to the shore; but wherever I advanced the water spread around me, baffling my endeavors, and in several places the unstable material on which I stood been the fearfully beneath my tread. Once my foot broke through, and the cold element chilled me with a feeling approaching death. Wet, exhausted, hopeless and desperate, I feit that it became me to collect my energies and perish—if I must perish—with the composite and dignity of an banest

> A MISSOURI VIEW OF ART. well known lady artist in flom

relates that while standing one day near the statue of Apollo Belvidere presence of a country woman new comer, a well-to-do ic American woman introduced herself as Mrs. Raggies, of-, Mo., and then

"Is this the Apollo Belvidere ""
Miss H.—testified to the identity

The interrogated lady replied that masterpieces of the world.
Manly beauty, and all that sort of th ng ?" said the lady from the land of he setting sun.

CONCERNING PENSIONS Hon. John A. Bentley, the efficient ead of the pension department, make

head of the pension department, in the following reply to a complaint: DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, PENSION OFFICE, Oct. 1st, 1886. The accumulation of cases in the offices, which could not for one and another reason be settled promptly, has for many years caused a greater or less nuffiber of complaints at the delays which have attained their considerawhich have attained their considera-tion and adjustment; but previous to the passage of the act of January 25, 1879, commonly known as the "Ar-rears Act," these complaints were comparatively few, although at their date there were more than 1,000,000 original claims which were unsettled, Since the passage of that act the de-lays have increased as the claims have increased, and complaints have rapid-by multiplied.

ly multiplied.

In view of the great delay which the claimants in general have already experienced, and which will grow more and more burdensome until some legislative relief shall be furnished by Congress, the following statement of the condition of the affairs in the peasion office is made for your information, in part explanation of the delays which you have experienced in the settlement of your claim.

The act granting persons for the delays

settlement of your claim.

The act granting pensions for disbility; and on account of death, incerred in the war of the rebellion, passed
on the 14th day of July, 1862; between
the dates July 1, 1861, and July 1, 1880,
683,839 claims for original claims were
presented, not counting those for service in the war of 1812.

The claims for resistance of the ser-The claims for pensions on a count of service in the war of 1812, for increase of pension, for arrears and for bounty land warrants which have

been presented during the same peri-od, number altogether 457,148, mak-ing a total of claims of all classes, 1,-Of the original claims 362,350 were

placed on the pension rolls previous to July 1st, last, and of other claims all had been disposed of except about 17,-In the course of the transaction of this business the pension office has made not less than 1,500,000 decisions, or a little less on an average of 100,000 per annum; the excess over the number of cases which have been made at the request of the claimants.

At the time of the passage of the
At the time of the passage of the
"Arrears Act" there were about 100,000 unsettled claims which were regarded as alive and pending; besides
these, there were not less than \$0,000
in the files which had been rejected
for one or another reason. Among
these claims which were in the files
and had not been admitted were about
15,000 which were counted as dead
claims—the claimants having abandoned the prosecution, or died leaving
them unsettled.

The "Arrears Act" not only because

The "Arrears Act" not only brought in new original claims at the rate of 10,290 per month for the whole period 10,250 per month for the whole person of seventeen months from January 1, 1879, to June 30, 1890—while the aver-age from July 1, 1878, to February 1, 1879, was only 1,597 per month—but it revived from thirty-to forty thous-and old cases which were in the reject-

Although under the ex ports avater of presenting the evidence a great deal of time is consumed in procuring the parole testimony, and often great delay in obtaining the record from the war department, because that department is not always able to furnish promptly the records called for ; yet, at the time of the passage of the 'Arrears Act," and for many months previously the office work was well up, and but a short time intervened between the date of receipt and answer of important letters in the cases, and but few weeks clapsed after the claimant had filed all the evidence in ble

case before it was taken up and set-The delays, such as they were, were in the main chargeable to the luability of the war department to furnish called for, or to the failure of the claim

ant to promptly supply the evidence which the office required. Since the passage of the "Arrears Act" there is a considerable sum accrued in the cases, and the desire to obtain this has spurred the natural anxiety of the claimants for an early settlement, and a greatly increased correspondence has been the result, the claimants often writing several let-

ters of inquiry before the first one has seen answered. The letters, additional evidence, and other mail matter amounted, during the last year, to nearly 900,000 pieces, while for the year ending June 30, 1876, there was only 355,183 pieces. The in-quiries by members of Congress alone during the last year were nearly 40,-000, while for the year 1876 they were

The pensions remaining unsettled and letters lying several months un-answered, the claimants, unsequaluted as they are with the situa he office, have very naturally complained at what appeared to them an unreasonable delay, but which was, in fact, tacvitable delay attending the sudden influx of such an immensely increased business, which is imposi-ble to dispatch promptly as it came in, for lack of a proper system for ob-taining the evidence, and for the want

in advance.
Since the business cannot all be dispatched promptly, and all letters answered at once, each claimants is compelled to await his turn in order that there be no partiallity shown among the claimants.

By filing the letters of inquiry with the papers in the case to which they respectfully relate, and giving them attention when the case was taken up, the office has, during the last year, allowed 14,337 original pensions, (not including those for the war of 1812) a ed in any year since 1871, in spite of tempt to have answered the letters promptly as received would have pre-vented a great many of these settle-ments, because it would have been

claims remaining unsettled, and new claims continue to come in ; there are also several thousand claims for in-

by the statistics given, is doing all it can with the system which it is com-pelled to employ, and the facilities pelled to employ, and the facilities which are available to settle the cases and relieve the delays; and the commissioners of pensions, with the Secre-tary of the Interior, has recommend-ed changes in the laws which it is be-lieved will enable claimants to obtain an early settlement of their cases, but

Very respectfully yours,
J. A. BENTLEY,
Commissioner of Pensions

An Indiana Boy's Berim. fall who was wading in one of the got ters was carried by the swift dress through a catch beain and into a server His father, bearing of the arrider made rapid time, found his boy walking up the bank. The lad says when he fell into the sewer he tried to stand still until help could arrive but the current was too powerful, and he was swept swiftly down the long narrow water. He says he thought if he could keep his head above the water has enough, he would finally strips the Wolsah, and have a chance to get access.

of butter-making in southern Califor nia, and this is founded upon his own experience. Since January 1, 1880, he has made from 56 cows and ten beifen